

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00

AID-05 IGA-01 FBO-02 A-01 SY-05 SCCT-01 CIAE-00 PM-03

H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 OPR-02 OC-05 CCO-00 /084 W

----- 088521

O R 281212Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 4101

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL UDORN

CDR USSAG NKP

DIA WASHDC

MACTHAI BANGKOK THAI/J-3

CINCPAC

CINCPACFLT

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 3796

SINGAPORE FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY HABIB

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, EAID, LA, US

SUBJECT: USAID COMPOUND IS REOPENED

1. IT HAS ALREADY BEEN A LONG DAY AT 4:00 P.M., MAY
28. NEVERTHELESS, WE BELIEVE THAT WE ARE STUMBLING
FORWARD AND THAT THE AGREEMENT REACHED LAST NIGHT
IS WORKING MORE OR LESS. THE USAID COMPOUND HAS BEEN
OPENED, OUR PEOPLE ARE THERE AND WE ARE GIVING ADVANCE
PAY TO USAID EMPLOYEES.

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2. LAST NIGHT MINISTER OF ECONOMY AND CO-CHAIRMAN OF

THE JCCIA, SOTH PHETRASY, AND THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE PROTESTORS AGREED TO MEET US AT 0800 TODAY IN ORDER TO OPEN UP THE COMPOUND AS AGREED. AT 0730 THIS MORNING, HOWEVER, WE WERE ADVISED THAT THE PROTESTORS WANTED TO CLEAN UP THE COMPOUND AND WOULD NOT BE PREPARED TO OPEN IT UNTIL 1300. NEVERTHELESS, GENERAL ROUND, MR. RAMSEY AND I WENT TO THE GATE AT 0800 AND STRONGLY PROTESTED THIS DEPARTURE FROM THE AGREED PROCEDURE.

3. THIS AFTERNOON SOTH PHETRASY COULD NOT COME AT 1300, OSTENSIBLY BECAUSE OF THE CABINET MEETING BEGINNING AT 1500, BUT WE WENT WITH HIS CHEF DE CABINET KHAM SING TO THE COMPOUND. INSIDE WE FOUND THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE PROTESTORS, NOTABLY KHAM SAI (PRESIDENT OF LAO STUDENT FEDERATION), WHO IS CLEARLY THE LEADING VOICE, SOME MIXED POLICE, USAID EMPLOYEES AND UNKNOWN OTHERS WHO, TOGETHER WITH A LARGE PRESS AND TV PRESENCE, FORMED QUITE A CROWD.

4. THE FIRST HASSLE OCCURRED WHEN BOTH THE CHEF DE CABINET AND THE PROTESTORS MADE CLEAR THAT THEY ALL WANTED TO ACCOMPANY US ON THE TOUR OF THE COMPOUND TO MAKE SURE WE SAW THAT NO DAMAGE HAD BEEN DONE. WE IMMEDIATELY POINTED OUT THAT THIS WAS IN VIOLATION OF THE AGREEMENT WHICH PROHIBITS THE PRESENCE ON THE COMPOUND OF ANYONE BUT USAID EMPLOYEES. THE PROTESTORS GAVE A VERY TORTUOUS EXPLANATION TO THE EFFECT THAT THEY WERE PART OF THE EVENT AND THEREFORE WANTED TO ACCOMPANY US ON THE SURVEY. AFTER A LONG DISCUSSION WE AGREED THAT A LIMITED NUMBER OF THEM, TOGETHER WITH THE PRESS, COULD JOIN THE TOUR. (IT WAS THE PROTESTORS WHO INSISTED ON THE PRESS TO COME AS WITNESSES THAT THEIR OCCUPATION HAD BEEN PEACEFUL.) HOWEVER, WE INSISTED THAT EVERYONE ELSE CLEAR THE COMPOUND, INCLUDING THE POLICE. THIS WAS DONE BUT TOOK TIME.

5. WE THEN WALKED AROUND AND WENT INSIDE THE AMERICAN COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION RESTAURANT. THE KITCHEN HAD BEEN USED AND WAS IN QUITE A MESS. OTHERWISE, THERE

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WAS NO VISIBLE DAMAGE ANYWHERE. AFTER THIS GENERAL VISIT, THE CHEF DE CABINET AND THE PROTESTORS INSISTED THAT TOGETHER WITH THE PRESS WE VISIT THE MAIN USAID BUILDING AND SATISFY OURSELVES THAT THE MARINE GUARD AND THE LAO DRIVER WERE IN GOOD HEALTH AND HAD NOT BEEN INJURED. THERE FOLLOWED ANOTHER LONG DIFFICULT ARGUMENT. FINALLY, I STATED THAT WE AGREED TO THE VISIT BUT I WANTED IT UNDERSTOOD THAT THE WHOLE AREA HAD

DIPLOMATIC IMMUNITY AND THAT THEY WERE ALL VISITING IT AT OUR INVITATION. THIS CAUSED A NEW ARGUMENT WITH THE CHEF DE CABINET WHO INSISTED THAT HE HAD A RIGHT TO MAKE THIS VISIT AS HE HAD BEEN DIRECTED TO DO SO BY HIS MINISTER. THIS ISSUE WAS NOT RESOLVED.

6. NEVERTHELESS, WE ALL TROOPED TO THE USAID HEAD-QUARTERS BUILDING, WHERE THERE FOLLOWED A COMEDY OF ERRORS. IT TOOK SOME 15 MINUTES TO GET THE IRON CURTAIN RAISED, WHICH SIMPLY ADDED TO THE ALREADY HIGH SUSPICIONS OF THE PROTESTORS. ON ENTERING THE BUILDING WE FOUND THE MARINE GUARD, SGT. WILBURN, BEARDED, PALE, AND TIRED BUT OTHERWISE WELL, AS WAS THE LAO DRIVER. UNFORTUNATELY, JUST AT THE ENTRANCE WILBURN HAD, ACCORDING TO REGULATIONS, SPREAD SOME SMOKE POWDER AS PROTECTION IN THE EVENT THE BUILDING WERE ATTACKED. THE PROTESTORS IMMEDIATELY CLAIMED THAT THIS PROVED AN INTENT TO KILL PEOPLE ENTERING THE BUILDING. WE THEN WANDERED THROUGHOUT THE BUILDING WITHOUT FURTHER INCIDENT.

7. PROTESTORS THEN INSISTED ON SEEING THE OTHER TWO AMERICANS WHO HAD BEEN HELD FOR THE PAST SEVEN DAYS. ONE WAS THE SECOND MARINE, CPL. MURPHY, IN THE DATT BUILDING AND THE OTHER THE COMMUNICATIONS TECHNICIAN, MR. DARDEN, WHO MANS THE LONG DISTANCE LINE. WE WERE VERY MUCH CONCERNED THAT THE PROTESTORS MIGHT CONTINUE TO INSIST ON VISITING EVERY BUILDING IN THE COMPOUND. SURPRISINGLY, HOWEVER, WE SIMPLY HAD TO WALK TO THE TWO BUILDINGS AND LET THE TWO MEN OUT. THE PROTESTORS DID NOT EVEN ASK TO VISIT THE BUILDINGS; THEY SEEMED SATISFIED. THE CHEF DE CABINET AND MOST OF THE PROTESTORS DEPARTED ON RELATIVELY AMICABLE TERMS.
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(VIGNETTE: KHAMSAY CAME TO SAY A FRIENDLY GOODBYE INDICATING HE WAS LEAVING WITH THREE FRIENDS IN A JEEP STATION WAGON - CLEARLY BELONGING TO THE MISSION. I ASKED WHERE THEY HAD FOUND THE VEHICLE. HE LAUGHED IN EMBARRASSED MANNER. THEY HAD "BORROWED" IT, HE SAID. WOULD IT BE ALLRIGHT TO TAKE IT? HE WOULD HAVE IT RETURNED THIS AFTERNOON*)

8. FINALLY, USAID AMERICANS CAME IN WITH ENVELOPES CONTAINING ADVANCE PAY FOR ALL USAID EMPLOYEES, A VERY LARGE GROUP OF WHOM HAD BEEN WAITING OUTSIDE ALL DAY. PAYMENT IS PROCEEDING AT THIS TIME. THE DATT IS BACK IN HIS BUILDING AND WE EXPECT TO OPEN UP TOMORROW ON A BUSINESS-AS-USUAL BASIS. WITH ANY LUCK, WE SHALL BE ABLE TO PROCEED ACCORDING TO THE AGREEMENT REACHED

LAST NIGHT.
CHAPMAN

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